

## **the father i never had by laurencathryn**

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**Summary:**

Hopper finds Mike alone, walking alongside the road in the middle of one of the worst storms of December, with fresh bruises on his face.

Hopper has always been tolerant of the boy, (mostly for El's sake) but the new fatherly concern he feels for the boy is new and slightly scary.

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## the father i never had

### Author's Note:

i hope you enjoy :)

Jim Hopper was *very* ready to be home.

There had been a robbery at the local grocery store this morning, and a couple hundred had been stolen from the register. There had been no witnesses, no evidence, and nothing had changed in the store, (besides the missing hundreds) and it looked just the same as it had at the closing time.

He had had Flo breathing down his neck to get a suspect list going all morning, and then the damn coffee machine went and broke when he needed it most in the afternoon, and on top of that, when they had finally caught a trail to track, a horrible December storm had come up, fast and hard, and had one, wiped whatever trail they had clean, and two, had created a thin, slippery sheet of ice on the road, which then mixed with the thick, bone-charring sleet that had come down from the heavens themselves, making the roads extremely dangerous. Jim Hopper was not looking forward to the next the half an hour (now hour long because of the reduction of speed the ice would ensue) he would spend driving through it all.

His day finally ended at the station after a long day of work, and after Flo had given him his keys as he walked out, he sprinted the 20 feet to his truck, hopping in and sliding into the vinyl seats as quickly as possible. He shrugged off his coat quickly-which was already soaked from only being out in the slanted sleet for a mere 30 seconds. He turned the keys and put the truck into drive, carefully driving out of the parking lot.

He had been driving in a comfortable silence for around 5 minutes when his thoughts finally drifted onto Eleven and how she was dealing with the sudden storm.

In the short year and a half that he had known her, they had instantly

bonded, and Hopper had become like a father to the kid. He relishes now in the fact that she is warm and safe in the small secluded cabin, but can't help feeling guilty at what flashbacks she must be having right now-alone.

Hopper quickly forces that thought out of his mind, and reassures himself that El must have radioed that Wheeler kid she's so infatuated with, and knowing how head over heels the kid is for her, he probably ran over to the cabin in the storm to save his "damsel in distress."

Hopper chuckles to himself at the thought.

Hopper has always liked the kid--hard to believe, yes. Fathers are supposed to hate their daughters little "boyfriends" or whatever it was that El and Mike were, but the harder he pushed himself to try to hate him, the more he found himself liking the damn kid.

But hey, anyone who loved El as purely and fiercely as he himself did--couldn't be on his bad side.

Not even two seconds after he thought about the kid, he whirred by a shape walking alongside the road,--distinctly Mike shaped.

Hopper slammed on his brakes and took the truck into reverse so fast that he even surprised himself. After getting closer, there was no doubt that it was Mike, his long, lanky, 15-year-old figure noticeable from anywhere.

Hopper ignores the pelting rain that cuts through his clothes as he jumps out of the car and races to the shivering teen who had stopped walking and was looking at the Chief with a look of pure incoherence. Hopper tries to ignore the fact that the kid is sporting only a thin white cotton tee shirt, small sweatpants and waterlogged sneakers on his appearance. He also tries to block out the way Mike's tall frame sags the slightest bit under the weight of the jacket Hopper had placed gently on his shoulders moments ago.

And, he most *definitely* tries his hardest to at least give a worthy effort to ignore the purple shapes slowly forming along the boy's high cheekbones.

Even in the fog and rain, he can plainly see the contrast of the purple that is settling itself on the teen's pale purple travels from the boy's cheekbones to the underneath of his eye, and from the bridge of his nose to finally settling itself on the boy's upper lip. (the dried blood there was also something the Chief was trying very hard to ignore.)

Cold, hard, fury bubbles inside Hopper as he pushes Mike into the front seat of his truck and buckles him in. The kid hasn't spoken once to him yet, and Hopper doesn't know if that is because the kid can't, or just doesn't want to. Hopper tries and fails to get the kid to talk, and his concern for the boy grows by the minute.

*Mike is acting like Eleven was in those first couples of months when I first found her,* Hopper thinks with a start.

He pushes back the flashbacks that came with the thought and tries to focus his attention back on the kid to his right when another thought hits him.

*Eleven.*

---

God, he feels so stupid now. If anyone can get the boy to talk, it would be Eleven. Those two, in the week they had known each other, had formed a bond stronger than anything Hopper had ever seen between two people, let alone kids.

Hopper quickly decides to take a risk, out of his quickly growing concern for the boy, and decides to bribe him with a visit to El, but only if he tells him why the hell he was walking around with basically no clothes in the middle of one of the worst storms of the season.

Right as he is about to speak up, Mike abruptly sits upon from his slouched position and looks straight out in front of him and into the pouring rain, and speaks.

"It was my dad."

As Mike says this, Hopper instantly understood as to what he was

referring to and instantly started to see red.

The bruises.

He should have known.

A boy like Mike knew better than to venture from the safeness of his house looking for trouble.

But, Hopper realizes with the start, is that when your supposed "safe place" becomes a place you can't even go to anymore, anyone would go to the next first place they saw as safe, which explains why he was walking in the direction of the small, desolate cabin Hopper and El were currently residing in.

Hopper forces himself to calm down and finally responded to the boy, who was still intensely looking out the window at the falling rain.

"Kid-" Hooper starts as he turns to face the boy, -"I need to get you home, a hospital, anywhere. Let me call-" he says, but is cut short when Mike wheels around to face him, which gives Hopper a clear, unobstructed view of the expression pinned on the boy's face.

The pure look of terror and pain that passes Mike's face at the mention of going home catches the chief highly off guard, causing him to lose his train of thought.

"No," Mike says in a tight, panicked voice.

"Take me to Lucas', or Dustin's, or Max's for all I care!" "Just-" "- Anywhere but there." He finishes quickly. Hopper notices that Mike's expression darkened when he said "there" like it was some evil, cursed place.

Well figures, since he just admitted to getting beat up by his own father, Hopper wouldn't expect him to be dying to go back.

"Jeez kid, how dull do you think I am?" Hopper asks the boy incredulously.

"Why the hell would I just send you off to a friend's house so you could just sneak out the back and run away again?" Hopper says, his

temper rising with each word.

"And also," Hopper shouts, his vision going red at the edges, "Where the hell would you go anyways?!" Hopper asks with a mix of frustration and genuine curiosity.

Hopper stops short, another question suddenly hitting him.

"Where were you going?" Hooper asks in a bold tone.

The damn kid just kept looking anywhere and everywhere but him, fidgeting heavily under his gaze.

"Where." It wasn't a question, more like a command.

Hopper notices just in time that the boy's eyes had gone red-rimmed and watched with a sudden concern as the kid took a shaky breath and spoke, turning his head slightly to look at Hopper.

"Eleven." Mike's voice cracks in the middle of her name, sharp and loud and noticeable, much like the crack in Hopper's heart at seeing the kid in so much pain.

After saying her name, the teary teen squeezes his eyes shut tight, letting two tears escape from them.

They roll down his face, race down his chin, and fall down onto the boys clasped hands in his lap.

Mike pays no attention to this, just keeps his eyes closed, and lets his head fall down slowly until it lowers itself down onto the truck's dashboard.

After watching that, and finally seeing how vulnerable Mike is at the moment, Hopper finally decides that there is no way in hell he is letting the kid go back home, (much less out of his sight,) and quickly makes a conflicting decision.

Hopper turns around in his seat and grabs the keys that had been haphazardly thrown in the back alongside countless other things, which had been desperately placed there in an attempt to make room for Mike in the front seat.

He shoves the keys into the ignition, sets the car into drive, and pushes down the pedal halfway to the floor, causing the truck to go to 0-25 in about 5 seconds.

The sudden movement makes Mike's head slam into the dashboard, causing him to jolt up quickly and look at Hopper with surprise mixed with curiosity.

"Where are we going?!" the boy asked hesitantly, his eyes never leaving the road.

Hopper decides since the kid wouldn't answer him earlier, that he would give the kid a bit of payback and return the favor.

So, Hopper pretends the boy didn't speak and keeps his eyes firmly planted on the road.

He could tell the kid was getting nervous because he could practically feel the anxiety rolling off of him in waves.

He knows he's probably being a douche by doing this to the kid, especially after the "fantastic" night the teen has probably had so far, but, he keeps his mouth shut.

"Hopper!" Where are we going?!"

The kid is practically shouting at him by this point, so Hopper chooses to take pity on the poor kid and decides to answer.

"Home."

As he says this, the kid instantly goes pale and starts to immediately stutter and fidget uncontrollably.

"Hopper- please no, not home okay? Anywhere but home."

The Chief continues to ignore the kid and stares passively at the road.

"Chief, please! Not there. Please."

Mike draws out the "e" on the please and looks at Hopper with so much desperation on his face that Hopper feels his stony facade that

he put on crack in two.

Hopper lets out a dramatic sigh and finally turns to face the kid and speaks, loud and sharp.

'I never said whose home we were going to, Michael."

Hopper watches with amusement as the kids face turns into a look of half hope that they weren't going to his house and a look of mixed fear and disgust at the use of his full name.

But, Hopper's amusement quickly fades as Mike winces in pain after making said expression, having stretched the bruise on his cheekbones too much.

"Mike!" Hopper practically yells at the kid, pulling the truck to the side of the road they were currently driving on and grabbing the kids face, turning the bruise towards him.

The bruise on his cheekbone had gotten extremely darker than it had been in the rain earlier that evening, and the other smaller bruises on his nose and around his eye had also gotten darker as well. But, this wasn't what Hopper was most worried about at the moment.

What Hopper was worried about was the large cut on Mike's face spanning from the beginning of his eyebrow to the outer corner of his left eye.

The cut went down diagonally, and after a closer inspection, Hopper observed that it wasn't a clean cut, like one that a knife would cause, but was ridged and jagged, like Mike had been pushed roughly into something that just happened to be sharp.

This led to the new revelation that Ted hadn't just gotten angry and slapped the kid around a couple times as he had originally thought, but that Ted had actually hurt the kid more than Mike had let on. And, after a quick glance at Mike's hands, expecting evidence of Mike fighting back, and finding nothing, Hopper made another discovery, one that made a spur of red-hot anger go through him so quickly that his hold on Mike tightened ever so much, making the kid wince slightly at the increased pressure on his bruises.

Of course, Hopper paid no mind to this, as the new discovery both broke and strengthened him at the same time.

Ted had beat Mike up extensively, and Mike had let him.

This broke Hopper because he knew that Mike would never lay a finger on anyone, let alone his father. So when Ted had started laying into the kid, Mike had just stood down and had taken it, which hurt Hopper to no end to think about.

But, it strengthened Hopper though, as well, because it gave him the strength and determination to decide that after he deposited Mike somewhere safe, he was going to go the Wheeler's house and give Ted a taste of his own medicine, and a damn big dose of it too.

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*same car, same moment, mike's point of view.*

After finally getting out of Hopper's strong grasp, Mike pulled away as far as he could from the man, (the same man that Mike was 87.6 percent sure was literally vibrating with anger.)

Mike was so confused because he had thought that Hopper had seemed almost relieved when he had picked him up from the side of the road.

But now, Hopper was seething, and his expression was twisted up so far into itself that Mike was certain it was going to get stuck like that.

Hopper's eyes were glued to Mike's face, making him slightly uncomfortable. Mike had no idea what Hopper was seeing, but based on the pain radiating from the side of his face, he could make a pretty good guess.

They sat like that for a while, Hopper staring at Mike, lost in thought and not really registering what he was looking at, and Mike, extremely aware of the sight in front of him, trying to look anywhere and everywhere but Hopper, feeling extremely self-conscious.

After a couple minutes of silence, -Hopper still lost in thought beside him-, Mike laid his head down on the middle compartment of the truck, in a vain attempt to reduce the relentless pounding in his head.

But, the second his head made contact, he was out like a light, the night's events finally taking their toll.

The last thing he remembered from the truck ride was feeling warm, but most importantly safe.

Because although the Chief was scary as hell, he knew that when he was with the man, nobody could hurt him.

Not his dad, not Troy, not the Demogorgon, not anyone.

This was new to him, this feeling of complete safety.

But that, Mike decided, was his new favorite emotion.

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### ***same moment, same car, same night, hopper's point of view***

Hopper had realized that he had been spacing out for a long time, and when he glanced to see what the boy to his right was doing, he saw that Mike had crawled into a ball in his seat, put his head on the center console, and had fallen asleep.

He noticed that the kid was also slightly snoring, and decided that the kid was probably going to be out for a long time.

So, he let out a sigh, put the truck in drive, and carefully accelerated the truck to 50 on the familiar highway.

He drove in silence for about 20 minutes along the water slick road, lost in thought, until the car in front of him made a sudden stop, forcing Hopper to make a sharp left turn around them.

In the process of the sharp turn, Mike's head had shifted to the left and was now currently resting against Hoppers' thigh, dangerously close to his gun.

So, in fear that the kid was going to shift and accidentally shoot his eye out, Hopper lightly lifted the kid's head up and placed his hand between Mike and his gun, making a barrier between the two.

Hopper stayed like that, driving one-handed, with Mike's head resting against his hand, for the remaining 15 minutes of the drive.

When Hopper finally made his way to the cabin, he put the car into park and slowly and gently removed his hand from its position between his leg and Mike, and quietly got out of the car.

He was having an inner dilemma as he was standing there, his hand on the handle of the right-hand door of the truck.

He couldn't decide if it would be better to get Eleven aware of the situation first or to just bring Mike into the cabin unannounced.

He decided he wouldn't leave the kid alone, in fear that he might wake up alone, cold and scare-

Yeah, he was definitely bringing the kid in now.

So, he swung the door open, (quietly of course), reached over the sleeping teen and carefully unbuckled Mike's seat belt, holding it to make sure it didn't snap up, and gently released it when he was certain it wasn't going to fly up into the teen's face.

Then came the hard part.

Hopper awkwardly leaned into the car and grabbed around Mike's legs and shoulders, holding him bridal style out of the truck and into the cold air.

It was a miracle the kid didn't wake up: a miracle that Hopper was very thankful for.

Hopper started the trek to the cabin then, carefully walking and trying to avoid sticks or leaves that may crack and break underneath his weight, which would potentially wake the kid up.

Hopper was also trying his hardest not to stumble, and to keep his gait even, not wanting to, again, wake Mike up.

Hopper did falter mid step though when Mike turned his head a fraction of an inch and pressed his forehead into the front of Hopper's uniform.

After regaining his step, Hopper continued walking until the cabin came into view.

All the lights were out, except for one light coming from the living room, and guessing from the flickering it was creating on the curtains, it wasn't a light at all, and El was probably up watching TV waiting for him to come home.

Hopper walked up the stairs as quietly as he could, internally cringing each time the wooden boards let out a loud creak, and then anxiously glancing at the kid to make sure he was still asleep.

When Hopper got to door, he mentally slapped himself because he realized he would have to knock, and because Eleven was watching TV, it would probably have to be loud so she could hear it over the late night soap opera she was probably watching at the moment.

So, Hopper hesitantly reached his hand up to the door, and lightly rapped on the door, praying to the gods that she could hear it.

He felt Mike stir at the noise, and instantly put his hand down, immediately extremely aware of each and every noise that he was making, and the noises coming from around him.

As if it was some sort of miracle, his prayers came true, and out of the corner of his eye, he noticed the curtain to his left part to the side a bit.

The curtain stayed parted to the side for only a few seconds before it was slammed to the side, making all the curtains sway with the force.

And then suddenly the lock clicked and the door swung open, revealing a teary-eyed Eleven with the name Mike on her lips.

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*flashback, same night, a couple hours before. eleven's point of view.*

It was late.

Too late.

Hopp- Dad.

Dad should be home by now.

Eleven was starting to get worried.

The clock to her right displayed flashing bright numbers.

The numbers that Eleven was sure were wrong.

The numbers read 8-5-6

Dad said he would be home at 7-1-5

He lied.

Friends don't lie.

He had explained to her once, that he was her Dad, not her friend. He had said that Mike was her friend, but that he was her parent.

Apparently, that was different.

Mike would never lie.

Mike.

Eleven hadn't talked to him for a couple hours, so she got out the Supercomm Mike had given her a bit ago, and turned it on, turning it into Mike's channel.

"...Mike?"

She released the button and was met with lonely static that was a harsh replacement for the boy's soothing voice.

After a few minutes of waiting, she decided she would try again. He's probably eating dinner, or with Dustin or Will. Yes. He was probably just busy and was probably warm and safe and happy. But, Eleven

couldn't help but worry. Mike always answered when she radioed him.

Always.

So, she tried again.

"Mike."

There was a hint of desperation in her voice, but she was trying her hardest to keep her voice even. For Mike.

When he didn't answer for several minutes, she didn't even try to attempt to hide the worry in her voice, because now she wasn't worried, she was scared.

After 20 excruciating minutes of trying to reach him, and only being met with the cold static, Eleven decided instead of hearing Mike through the Comm, she would just go and see him.

So, she grabbed a towel from the hamper on the floor and wrapped it around her head.

Not perfect, but it would have to do.

She turned on the Comm once again, listening to the static. Feeling the static. Focusing entirely on a mental picture of Mike.

She would find him.

She needs to.

And then, just as she feels like she isn't going to be able to find him, the cabin disappears around her, and she finds herself in the dark expanses of her mind.

Distantly, she hears yelling. Although she can't recognize the voice off the top of her head, she can't help but feel like she's heard the voice before, long ago.

She turns towards the yelling and starts walking towards the sound, not seeing anything except for the black expanses of nothingness,

until two people appear suddenly in the distance.

One of them she immediately recognizes as Mike, and with that, she starts running as fast as she possibly can towards him.

She skids to a stop, though, about 20 feet away from him, when she sees the other figure...Ted? Yes, that is Ted. Mike's dad. Good. Ted is good.

She is wrongly mistaken.

Her happy mood dissipates quickly as she realizes what is going on.

She watches in a silent horror as the man creeps closer towards Mike, screaming obscenities at him.

She watches when Mike backs away from him, tears coating his face.

She watches as Ted raises his hand up and makes contact with Mike's face.

She watches him fall.

Hard.

She watches as Ted pulls him roughly from the floor, and pushes him into the glass coffee table.

Mike doesn't get up. He lays there, motionless.

Ted has left by this point, leaving Mike alone. Hurt.

Eleven has never felt so scared, so helpless, since back at the lab.

She knows he can't hear her, but she still screams at him to wake up. She screams until her throat is raw, and her voice is barely a whisper.

It's so quiet. So quiet she can hear her heart crack at the sight of Mike.

She doesn't care how long she's been sitting there, staring at Mike.

She's not leaving until he wakes up.

He does, eventually, and when it happens, it is so sudden that it causes Eleven to startle and fall backward from her seated position, and lose her concentration on Mike.

She can feel herself start to fade back into reality, and she can feel herself becoming more and more disconnected with Mike.

But before she fades completely back into reality, into the small cabin she calls a home, she notices something.

She notices the broken glass shards on the carpet where Mike was laying, and she notices the blood coating the slippery glass.

Mike is hurt, Bad.

Not good.

Not good at all.

---

**--little flashback from when hopper first got home--**

*And then suddenly the lock clicked and the door swung open, revealing a teary-eyed Eleven with the name "Mike" on her lips.*

---

Hopper was frozen in place when Eleven walked through the doorway. He wasn't entirely sure if that was because Eleven was using her powers on him, or because the sight of his little girl was enough to stop a whole army in their steps.

Tear tracks stained her face, and fresh ones were threatening to spill out of her watery brown eyes. Her hair was a mess, and her clothes were wrinkled in about every spot. Her usually happy, easy going demeanor was completely changed, now defeated and sad.

Standing there in the doorway, she only saw Mike.

Her eyes were pinpointed on his still form, and her whole body was tight with tension, wanting to run and hug the boy in Hopper's arms,

but being held back from doing so in fear that she would break him.

After what seemed like an eternity of her standing in the doorway, staring defeated at Mike, she finally stepped forward, 3 careful, calculated, tight, steps.

She stopped right in front of Hopper, and slowly lifted up her hand level to Mike's face. She moved to push the boy's messy hair out of his face, but hesitated, letting out a whimper and squeezing her eyes shut, letting two hot tears race their way down her cheeks.

When again she opened her eyes, she again lifted her hand, and set it on the boy's forehead, jumping a little when Mike roused and pushed into her hand, seeking the warmth it was providing.

After a few moments, Eleven removed her hand from Mike's forehead and moved to the side, allowing space for Hopper to move through the door into the cabin.

Hopper stepped through, immediately relieved at the blast of warm air that hit him as he walked into the cabin.

He spun around a little, doing a sort of dance, as Eleven would later explain it as, with the boy in his arms, trying to decide where to lay him down.

He eventually decided on placing the boy on the couch, since it was closest to the heater, and so he could keep an eye on the kid from anywhere in the cabin.

After setting Mike down, almost immediately Eleven went and sat on the floor right next to the boys head, grabbing his hand and holding it tight. She was silent as she gently brushed the boy's hair from his face, and held an expression on her face that Hopper could only describe as love.

Love. The dreaded 'L' word that every father feared for their daughters.

As much as Hopper loved to deny it, there was no doubt that his daughter loved Mike. No doubt that Mike loved Eleven. None at all.

It was hard for him to believe, that his 15-year-old daughter had found love, and a real love, not just the puppy love you have with your boyfriends in the 5th grade, but actual, real love. A love where you raise up each other, support each other, comfort each other and complete each other. I mean jeez, when Hopper was 15 he didn't even know the first thing about relationships, much unlike Mike and Eleven who interacted like they had been married for years with a house and two children. Seriously, those kids had been officially dating for what, a year now? A year and a half? And they already had their whole future figured out it seemed. To Hopper, that was unbelievable.

But, he knew that Mike loved Eleven.

Really loved her.

So as long as his little girl was happy, well, so was he.

After setting Mike down, almost immediately Eleven went and sat on the floor right next to the boy's head, grabbing his hand and holding it tight. She was silent as she gently brushed the boy's hair from his face, and held an expression on her face that Hopper could only describe as love.

"Eleven."

Hopper shifted in his seat in the armchair in the corner and turned to face the girl. Eleven continued to gaze at Mike, giving no indication that she had heard him.

"Eleven, answer me."

The girl lifted up her head hesitantly, and slowly raised her eyes to meet his own.

"Eleven, honey, we need to get Mike home, his mother is probably worried sick."

Eleven's eyes went wide as saucers, and she scooted closer to Mike, and grabbed his hand tighter, almost protectively.

"No. Mike stays here." Eleven says with as much confidence as her

small 15-year-old stature could muster. "He can't go back there. Not safe."

She shakes her head violently when she says "not safe."

"Eleven, what do you mean by not safe?" Hopper is confused for a moment before it dawns on him.

The bruise.

Ted caused that bruise.

Oh.

---

Hopper repeats this revelation to Eleven and watches as the color drains from her face.

"You..you weren't supposed to know about that," she says in one of the smallest voices he has ever heard on her.

"And you were?" He says as his gaze turns to the once again sleeping teen on the couch.

"Well.." she says hesitantly, "H-he needed someone to talk to when it got bad...and I was always there... it hasn't been this bad in a couple wee-"

She is cut off by Hopper standing up abruptly from his position at the armchair and is surprised when he comes and kneels next to her, their faces inches apart.

"This has happened before?" He asks with barely controlled anger.

Eleven doesn't answer, settling instead for turning her gaze to the floor, suddenly finding it very interesting. Then, she closes her eyes for a moment and freezes in place. Hopper didn't realize what she was doing until he noticed that the T.V. had turned on and until he saw the small line of blood trickle down her nose.

"Oh hell no, you are not getting out of this one." He said as he moved to grab her arm to shake her out of whatever trance she had put herself in.

But before he made contact with her arm, her hand shot out in front of her and she grabbed his wrist, hard.

The second their hands made contact, everything went black.

When he opened his eyes after regaining consciousness, he was met with darkness. Everything around him was dark, and the ground beneath him had inches of standing water, making his shoes wet. The only source of noise he could hear was the splashing of the water as he walked, and his own breathing.

Hopper sat in silence for a couple minutes, wondering where he was and what the hell had happened before he heard something coming behind him.

He turned around and was surprised to see it was Eleven-or at least a hallucination of her- tiptoeing towards him, crying.

"Elev-" He is cut off by her shaking her head.

"I'm sorry," she says through hiccupped crying. "Don't tell Mike. please." She has stepped closer to him now, her voice pleading with him to understand.

"I just had to show you... I had to," she says in a broken voice.

Hopper is about to tell her it was okay, to question her about what she could show him that was so bad, before yet again, she grabs his hand.

And yet again, his world goes black.

Although this time he doesn't wake up in a world of darkness, but instead, a world of black and blue.

---

Distantly, she hears yelling. Although she can't recognize the voice off the top of her head, she can't help but feel like she's heard the voice before, long ago.

She turns towards the yelling and starts walking towards the sound, not seeing anything except for the black expanses of nothingness, until she sees two people appear suddenly in the distance.

One of them she immediately recognizes as Mike, and with that revelation, she starts running as fast as she possibly can towards him.

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And when Mike backs away from him, tears coating his face.

And when Ted raised his hand up and made contact with Mike's face.

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She watches as Ted pulls him roughly from the floor, and pushes him roughly into the glass coffee table.

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---

When Hopper comes back to, he is not in the world of darkness but sprawled across the floor in the cabin.

Images flash through his mind, each one cutting deep-like the cut on Mike's forehead.

The cut that he watched Ted give to him.

*Eleven had given Hopper a memory, had let him relive that moment through her, had let him feel everything she had felt, see everything she had seen.*

*Now he understood why Mike couldn't go home.*

*He understood far too well.*

---

*mike's point of view again, finally.*

When he woke up, he faintly heard the sound of the door slamming shut, and the sound of a car engine starting up a few moments later. He looked around and found that he vaguely recognized where he was, but not entirely.

He was laying on a couch, in a dimly lit dusty living room. There was an armchair in the corner, a small (unplugged) T.V. in the center, and a small square table with two chairs on either side.

His hungry stomach couldn't help but notice the food strewn across said table. An opened box of Eggos sat on the left side of the table, and an apple sat perfectly in the middle.

Dishes from what he presumed was dinner were still left out on the table. There was only one plate set, complete with a napkin, fork, cup, butter kni-

He paused.

Butter knife.

Mike and butter knives did not have a good history.

Not a good one at all.

---

### **3 YEARS AGO**

*"Michael Wheeler, you come here when you are asked to!" His mother's voice rang out from downstairs, presumably from the kitchen.*

*Mike had woken up to the sound of his mother's voice calling out to him. He had groaned and had pulled his comforter over his head to -it was a Saturday after all- and had accidentally fallen back asleep. He had only awoken when he heard his mother's voice call out yet again, a little less cheery this time.*

*He begrudgingly got out of bed and had slowly made his way downstairs to the kitchen. When he got there he found his parents and Nancy were already sitting down, food on their plates, waiting for him to sit before eating. His mother and father both had a look of annoyance, while his sister had a look of sympathy.*

*"Michael, you come when I call, understood?" She said as he sat down.*

*"Yeah mom", he had said with a weary tone, "I understand."... "I'm sorry." His mother had looked pleased with his apology and had smiled lightly before looking down to her plate.*

*"Can I eat now?", he had asked, "the pancakes are getting cold."*

*His mother was about to nod her head before Ted silenced her with one look.*

*"No, Michael. You will not be eating breakfast with us today. Or lunch for that matter."*

*Saying he was surprised was an understatement. Even his mother and sister had barely been able to contain their disbelief.*

*'But dad-' He was cut off sharply by a butter knife swiftly coming down on his hand, making a sharp 'thwack' noise. He was too surprised by the movement that he didn't register the pain until he looked down.*

*A thin line had been cut into his skin, going much more in depth than in size. The line went from the edge of his pinky to the bottom of his thumb, straight across all four of his knuckles, which were all bleeding quite heavily.*

*He had uttered a noise of half fear and half disbelief, before Ted's voice rang out yet again, making him jump.*

*"Now you listen here to me son, or should I even call you that?" Ted had said with a striking voice.*

*"Dad-" he had said, his voice hiding nothing.*

*"No. No son of mine would talk back to his mother and make the family wait for him to drag his sorry ass downstairs to be able to eat."*

*Mike couldn't speak, he could only stare.*

*"No son of mine would expect a reward after behaving like that, and no son of mine will get a reward for acting like that."*

*"You're useless Michael." He had said with a cold voice.*

*Cold like the steel of the now slightly bloody butter knife in his father's hand.*

*Mike struggled to not let the hurt seep into his face.*

*By the look of his mother and sister, he hadn't done a very good job.*

*"You disappoint me, Michael. You're always late and you never clean up the messes you make. Even now as we sit, you're making a mess." Ted rolled his eyes. "Pathetic."*

*Mike looked down and saw what his father was referring to. The cut on his hand had spilled under his hand and was now seeping into the white tablecloth Nancy had bought his mother for Christmas.*

*"Once you clear the table, and clean up that mess, I want you out of my house." He had said, ignoring the calls of protest from both his mother and sister, before standing up and walking out the door, slamming it on his way out.*

*Mike couldn't help but notice he had grabbed the bottle of whiskey on the counter before doing so.*

*Once he had left, his mother and sister had sat there in awe for a couple of seconds before jumping into action without a word. His mother had rushed upstairs to get the first aid kit, and his sister had cleared the dishes and had begun to remove the blood stain from the tablecloth before his mother had come back down the stairs.*

*Once everything was clean, both girls rushed to Mike, his mother tending to his hand, and his sister clinging to the other one for dear life.*

*Everyone chose to ignore the tears streaming down the scared boy's face, and their own.*

*True to Ted's word, Mike had not spent the night at his own house that night.*

*He had slept on the cold bench of the bus stop across the street, cold and miserable and terrified.*

*But truthfully, it was way better than Ted Wheeler and his butter knives.*

*-end of flashback-*

---

Mike was trembling with fear as he snapped out of his flashback. He didn't know where he was exactly, but anything was better than the home he ran away from just hours ago.

Mike couldn't go home.

He couldn't.

It would kill him, literally.

---

--A little *flashback from earlier*--

*When he woke up, he faintly heard the sound of the door slamming shut, and the sound of a car engine starting up a few moments later.*

---

### ***hopper's point of view***

He hadn't wanted to leave the kids alone. He hadn't. But with everything that Eleven had just shown him-it had been too much.

He had needed to get out of that stuffy little cabin.

And with Mike asleep (or so he thought) on the couch, and Eleven asleep in her room, he had locked the door behind him and had left. He grabbed his coat and car keys out of pure habit and had almost literally run out of the small little cabin the woods. He didn't where he was going to go, not really. He just knew he needed out.

After walking numbly through the woodsy path to his car, he hesitated only a minute, looking back at the little house, at the light seeping through the windows, before shaking his head and pulling the car door open and starting the engine in one swift movement.

He had been driving for a couple minutes through town, his mind not focusing on where he was going exactly, but on what Eleven had shown him only an hour ago.

Hopper was too overcome with shock to really feel anything else. He knew the anger would come, the hatred, the pain-he just wasn't sure when.

But it came alright.

Right as he pulled into the Wheeler's driveway.

As he shut the car off and opened the door, he paused-something

catching his eye. All the lights in the house were off but two, the living room, and the basement.

But that wasn't what Hopper had been looking at.

Nancy Wheeler was sitting in the middle of the living room, on her hands and knees, picking out shards of broken glass from the carpet.

She looked as if she had been crying.

Realizing it was probably a bad time to interrupt, Hopper started to turn around to go back to the car, until he caught a shadow moving across the curtain going towards Nancy.

He whipped back around to face the window, turning quick enough to see Ted's lumbering figure push her into the window, and raise his hand.

He watched as it cut through the air, aiming for one thing, and one thing only.

He watched it make contact.

He watched her fall.

He did not watch himself sprint to the front door, kick it open, grab Ted Wheeler and all his might and slam him across the room and into the wall.

He didn't watch himself grab him by the shirt, and punch him, clean and square.

No, he did not watch that.

Why?

Because damn, he got scary when he was mad.

---

***FLASHBACK***

*He whipped back around to face the window, turning quick enough to see Ted's lumbering figure close the curtains, and raise his hand.*

*The hand closest to Nancy.*

*He watched it make contact.*

*He watched her fall.*

*He did not watch himself sprint to the front door, kick it open, grab Ted Wheeler and all his might and slam him across the room and into the wall.*

*No, he did not watch that.*

*Why?*

*Because damn, he got scary when he was mad.*

---

### ***PRESENT TIME***

Hopper felt the fury settle in, hard and unwavering. The man, (or should he even call him one) was whimpering and crying underneath him from his place pressed up against the wall. If it were any other time, Hopper would have felt horrible with causing someone such pain-but now, he didn't give one damn.

Once upon a time, he would have looked at someone like Ted Wheeler and would have held pity over them. He would've tried to help. That's his job, after all, to help the good guys.

But his job was also to punish the bad guys.

And Ted Wheeler was just another bad guy in need of punishing.

At least that's what Hopper told himself as he slammed Ted's head against the wall, one, two, three times.

That's what he told himself as he picked him up by his collar and

threw him into the broken coffee table lying in the middle of the floor.

He was going to lay off, stop the beating, he really, truly, was.

Until he noticed that the coffee table was the same one that Ted pushed Mike into only hours before. The one that Nancy cowered behind as she hid from her father's painful hand. The one that Mrs. Wheeler no doubt looked at in sadness and fear this evening, wondering where her baby boy was. Her hurt, strong, stubborn baby boy.

The one that Ted Wheeler was now sprawled across, unconscious, blood from his no doubt broken nose sliding down his face, and dripping onto the bright white clean carpet.

Clean like his conscious.

He had no regrets in what he had done.

Mike on the other hand, well, that was a different story.

He didn't know how they found him, how they got out of the locked house, or how they walked the 15 miles from the cabin to here in the under 20 minutes that Hopper had actually been inside the house.

He did know that there was blood dripping down Eleven's nose, just as it was dripping down Mike's hand.

He did know that Ted Wheeler was staring wide-eyed down at his stomach, the stomach that was dripping red onto the bright white carpet, butterknife gleaming and catching the light when he moved to pull it out.

It had happened so slowly, yet so fast at the same time. Hopper had turned away for a moment to check on Nancy, I mean come on, the poor girl was whimpering in the corner, terrified. He wasn't heartless.

He had kneeled down and was so focused on getting her to talk to him that he didn't hear Ted get up from the broken mess of wood and glass on the floor, and stand up, hovering over him.

He didn't hear him walk slowly towards him, glass shard in hand, his intent most definitely not friendly.

Although, in his defense, he did hear the sound of shattering glass coming from the window, and he turned just in time to see Mike appear suddenly in front of the two men, fury taking over his whole face, a look Hopper had seen too many times in the mirror.

He did see Ted turn and run towards the kid, and he would like to pretend he didn't see when Mike stepped forward and thrust the butter knife in his hand into his father's stomach.

Yes, he would very much like to pretend he hadn't seen that.

Just like both Mike and Eleven wished they hadn't seen Ted pull the butter knife out of his own stomach, and thrust it into Hopper's, all in one sick, fluent movement, before falling unconscious onto the floor.

Just like they regretted seeing the look of pure panic and pain and fear mirroring their own in Hopper's eyes just before he too fell to the ground, out like a light.

Everyone saw things they regretted that night.

Nancy, seeing her brother stab their father, absolutely overcome with rage.

Mike, seeing the look of pure surprise and betrayal in his father's face when he plunged the knife in.

Eleven, seeing the only father figure she had fall to the ground, not knowing if he was going to live or die.

Hopper, seeing the two children whom he loved most dearest in front of him, their expressions of absolute fear and devastation forever etched into his mind.

Ted, well he did a lot of horrible things, things he didn't regret, so he doesn't deserve an explanation like the others.

But want to know a secret?

Just between me and you, out of the five people just named, only one of them left that house that night.

The only question now, is who?